

The Washington Biodiversity Council

Working to conserve the diversity of life in Washington

The Washington Biodiversity Council was created to develop and promote effective ways to conserve, steward, and restore Washington's stunning biological diversity—the rich mosaic of life that so many Washingtonians prize. It was established by Gov. Locke in 2004 after civic and environmental leaders recognized that the state's conservation strategies were largely reactive and crisis-driven and thus costlier and less effective than they should be. The Council is now working to chart a new and comprehensive approach to conservation—one that is strategic and forward-looking and that recognizes the importance of the state's rich biological diversity to our health, our economy, and our quality of life.

Comprised of 22 members representing a wide range of interests, the Council is directed to:

- Develop a 30-year comprehensive strategy for the state of Washington that sustains its biodiversity for future generations;
- Complete an assessment of incentive programs and propose ways to assist and encourage private landowners to maintain healthier landscapes at all scales;
- Craft a public education component that underscores the importance of biodiversity to our future economy and health; and
- Develop a publicly accessible Web site to share information about the state's biodiversity and incentive programs to assist landowners.

The Council must submit its strategy to the Governor and the Legislature by December 31, 2007.

The Council membership includes agriculture, forestry, ranching, local, state and federal government, academia, tribes, shellfish growers, and conservation organizations.

Selected accomplishments:

- Funded and launched two pilot projects, one on the West Side and one on the East Side, testing different approaches and incentives for engaging community members and landowners in voluntary stewardship activities.
- Commissioned a study on the scope and extent of landowner incentive programs in Washington. Preparing a set of issue briefs to encourage dialogue on ideas to significantly scale up incentive programs. This process will culminate in a stakeholder summit in November 2006, bringing together landowners and policymakers to identify the best approaches.
- Building the Washington Biodiversity Web site, scheduled for launch in April 2006.
- Preparing a report on the current extent and condition of Washington's biodiversity, including future projections based on historical trends.



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BIODIVERSITY COUNCIL MEMBERS

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Washington Biodiversity Council's Pilot Projects

Putting our Natural Assets to Work: Building a conservation economy in North Central Washington

This 18-month project is intended to develop a shared community vision for how biodiversity conservation can be integrated into the economic and social fabric of North Central Washington, including Okanogan, Douglas, and Chelan counties and the Colville Indian Reservation. The project will bring together the land conservation, agricultural, and economic development communities to learn more about the region's biodiversity, assess existing and potential incentive programs, and apply new conservation approaches, including habitat farming and grassbanking programs in Moses Coulee, the Methow Valley, and the Wenatchee River watershed.

The project will:

- Raise awareness about the regional tools and resources available for enhancing conservation.
- Discover new ways to combine biodiversity conservation with the maintenance of productive and profitable agricultural enterprises.
- Develop plans for implementing incentive programs to benefit riparian and shrub-steppe systems in the Wenatchee River watershed, Moses Coulee, and the Methow Valley.
- Evaluate, synthesize, and share results of pilot project with neighboring North Central Washington landscapes and other regions of the state.

Biodiversity Conservation: Engaging citizens and landowners in the ecological health of Pierce County

This 18-month project will fund the Pierce County Biodiversity Alliance to recruit and train "citizen scientists" to survey and monitor biodiversity in their community. It will also engage private and commercial forest landowners in a process to evaluate and increase the effectiveness of incentive programs in fostering voluntary conservation actions.

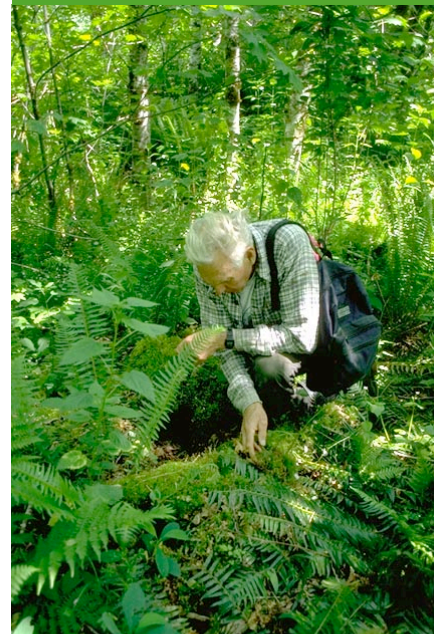
This pilot project focuses on a specific geographic area within the Puyallup River watershed, where the Pierce County Biodiversity Alliance will focus on two areas of biodiversity richness, both located along the White River.

This project will:

- Implement biological inventories (or "bioblitzes," a form of rapid biodiversity assessment) on the biologically rich lands included within the geographic scope.
- Recruit and train individuals and groups as citizen scientists to survey and monitor biodiversity using the principles and methods of NatureMapping.
- Engage both private and commercial forest landowners in voluntary incentive programs and assessment of the effectiveness of those programs.



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